

the answers of most people to the crime problem are fairly simple: hire more police; give them more leeway; put more people in prison; keep them in prison longer.

but there weren't many cops in thoreau's day, and there was a continent of wilderness for the bad guys to operate out of, yet he didn't fear the poor or the indians.

also we conveniently forget that the cops in the past created a lot of the problems that they/we now have to live with. they had nearly absolute power and, not surprisingly, in some contexts they abused it nearly absolutely. i can remember when it wasn't safe for anyone to drive through a nearby city because of the affirmative action, non-discriminatory police brutality, until a college football star either was hanged or hanged himself in his cell. the police were acquitted, but the place has been transformed into a model of correct procedures.

there's this private investigator who swims at the same ymca i do, and he must have been harassed by the i.r.s. or some other confiscatory agency because he says, "the only thing i fear more than a man with a gun is a man with a gun and a badge."

I GUESS HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IN UPWARD MOBILITY

our plumber,
a young man of
old world values,

says he'd like his kids
to grow up to be
teachers.

FROM PROPHET TO HISTORIAN

as a young teacher in the 1960s
i would try to interest my students
in coltrane, existentialism, godard,

resnais, new things that i thought
they'd respond to, and more often than
not they did.

now, thirty years later, i still try
to interest the young in coltrane,
sartre, godard, resnais, and such,
but it is less easy to interest the
young in what has become the past.

LAST ONE TO THE CIDER PRESS IS A ROTTEN APPLE

he had always been the youngest.

he started kindergarten at 4 1/2,
graduated from high school at 17 1/2,
from college at 20 1/2,
and had his ph.d. at 23 1/2.

he was always the youngest guy
on the team, and the coaches appreciated
that he still had room to grow.

he was married the first time at 20,
had three kids at 24,
seven at 40,
five grandkids at 53.

at 52 he already had
thirty years in the retirement plan.

that same year, however,
he was the youngest patient
in the pulmonary ward, then
the youngest of the old fucks
doing cardiovascular laps at the y.

it was as he was emerging from
one of these swims, and looking
around for where he had parked his car,
that it occurred to him he had a shot at being
the earliest recorded case
of alzheimer's.

"NATURE RED AT TOOTH AND CLAW"

the fat-with-blood mosquito
that just escaped my swat
and buzzed away,
as smug as it was plump,